

HER OWN ROOM¹

By THYRA SAMTER WINSLOW

I

THE wedding was over. Grandma Martin came home from the station, where the family had gone to tell Isabel and Walter good-bye, with a wonderful, almost unbelievable feeling of freedom and contentment. Grandma Martin had not felt so pleasurablely excited in a long time; not since years before, when Grandpa Martin was alive, and they lived in the little, square, white house in Morrilton. But this was now, and Grandma had the same tremulous feeling of happiness.

It wasn't because Isabel was married; that is, not because of what marriage might mean to Isabel. Walter was a nice fellow of course; Grandma had seen to that. It wasn't for Isabel's sake—because it was nice to think of Isabel as a bride—that made Grandma happy. It wasn't because Grandma had gone to the church and then to the station and home again in a taxi-cab; Grandma had ridden in auto-

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mobiles before, a number of times; at old Mrs. Wentworth's funeral, and the time Mrs. Rogers was so sick and had sent for her for a ride, too. And Grandma went to church every Sunday when her rheumatism wasn't too bad. So it wasn't the ride or the church. Of course Grandma's happiness was due, in a way, to Isabel's marriage and Grandma knew that Isabel was Mrs. Walter Reynolds now because of her efforts, and that Isabel's father—Grandma's son, David Martin—knew it, too, and Isabel's mother. That was all right. But Grandma knew why she had wanted Isabel to get married, and knew why she was so very happy now; for, and for the first time in twelve years, Grandma was going to have her own room.

A bedroom to herself! A real, regular bedroom, with a big closet in it and two windows, and a real bed and a dresser and two chairs! The room had been Isabel's, and now Isabel was married, had gone away for a honeymoon, was going to have an apartment of her own when she came back.

There may be those who would have sneered at the bedroom, those to whom white-enamelled and brass beds are not the last words in elegance, to whom red and shining almost-mahogany dressers are not things of beauty. Grandma Martin was not one of them. The wall-paper had been of Isabel's choosing, a cream paper covered with big red roses and with a cut-out border of roses in even

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larger and more impossible shapes and colorings. It never occurred to Grandma that this wall-paper might be changed for her, though, given a choice of wall-papers, an impossible situation, Grandma would have chosen something simpler and plainer; Grandma liked plain things. Grandma accepted the room as it was, a perfect room, her own room. It was just a step from the one bath-room. You could open the windows the way you wanted them, lots of ventilation or just a little, turn the radiator off or on, obeying only your own whims—or those of the janitor—in regard to heat.

More than that, that bedroom opened up to Grandma whole new avenues, almost forgotten avenues. Just think of it, in your own room you can go to bed, if you like, when you like, with no thought to the other inhabitants of the apartment. You can get up when you like, just so you rise in time to set the table for breakfast; you can take afternoon naps undisturbed, have your things where you want them, dress and undress nearly at any time—your own room.

Ever since Isabel announced her engagement, Grandma had been definitely considering the room. Before that, of course, there had always been the thoughts of it, even remarks to confirm them. "If Isabel ever marries, Grandma can have her room," or, "That room will be fine for Grandma if Isabel isn't here." Since Isabel's engagement, for two

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months now, the room had become almost a possession. Grandma had gone into it when Isabel was not there and looked round. She had sat down in the rocker at the window, imagined herself rightful owner, imagined her few possessions placed in neat order on the dressing-table, her clothes in Isabel's closet. Her own room!

It would be wonderfully pleasant, that room. For twelve years now Grandma Martin had lived with her son David Martin, and his wife, Mary, and their two children, Isabel and Ralph, and all of those twelve years Grandma had slept in the dining-room. Of course if you had asked her, Grandma would have told you that it was not a bad place to sleep. The dining-room was a nice room, fairly large, with a round, golden-oak table and six golden-oak chairs and a glittering, golden-oak buffet, holding an array of even more glittering cut glass—a punch-bowl with twelve cups suspended from its sides by metal prongs, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Martin's Saturday-night card club when they'd been married twenty-five years, and several odd pieces which Mary Martin had won at cards. On the wall were a pair of "dining-room pictures," appropriately of "fish and game." In the dining-room was a davenport, too, bought specially for Grandma, and covered with shining black leatherette, and it opened into a bed at night. Of course it had to be made up when you opened it, and the

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pillow and covers had to be brought in from the hall closet, and that is not easy when one is seventy-eight. And when one sleeps in the dining-room, one has to wait until all of the other members of the family have gone to bed before one can go, especially in an apartment such as the Martins had, all on one floor. There was a living-room in front, and then a hall on which opened two bedrooms and the bath between them, and at the end of the hall was the dining-room. You had to pass through the dining-room to get to the kitchen, and you know how it is—how people, especially young people, always want to get into the dining-room or the kitchen just about the last thing at night. When Ralph or Isabel had company in the living-room, Mr. and Mrs. Martin stayed in the dining-room, reading newspapers or playing cards, so Grandma could not go to bed as soon as she felt sleepy; she did not have a great deal of privacy. But sleeping in the dining-room was all right; Grandma did not complain about it. Didn't Ralph sleep in the living-room? Ralph's springs were undoubtedly just as hard and his mattress just as thin as the ones Grandma slept on.

David Martin was not poor. He had a small, but paying, electrical supply shop. He had moved twice in those twelve years, but he had never increased the number of rooms in his home. In New York rents are high and getting higher, and one

pays for apartments at so much per room. Martin was a thrifty fellow, tall and sallow and calculative. He was a bit of a braggart, and liked to think of the way he lived as "pretty good for poor folks." He felt that he was self-made, because Grandpa Martin had died when David Martin was in his first year of high school, and David had had to quit school and go to work. He was proud of the fact that he had come to New York "without a cent" and had made a success. He could have afforded a bigger apartment, with a room for Grandma and maybe a room for Ralph, too, but he did not see the need of it. Perhaps he did not realize what it meant to an old lady to sleep in a room where three meals are eaten every day—a room that was as much a family room as the living-room or the hall, with no place for little things that women like. But having a mother thrust upon one for support when one's family is quite complete without her is not always wholly pleasant. David Martin's expression about his apartment was, "I don't want to give the landlord all my money." He liked the thought, and used the expression or a similar one frequently. He said frequently, too, that the davenport Grandma had was "just as good or better than the bed my wife and I sleep on." He was rather proud of the way he treated his mother. He gave her a little spending-money every month, and until she grew so deaf as to prove an annoyance by asking ques-

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tions, he had taken her to the theatre or to the movies two or three times every season. Occasionally he bought her something new to wear and often asked: "Do you need anything, Ma?" Grandma's wants were few; when one is over seventy and spends most of one's time sewing or reading, there is not a great deal one needs, and Grandma did not like to ask for things or be an expense. Ralph and Isabel were rather selfish, thoughtless, never did much for Grandma; but, then, young people—Grandma got enough to eat, and she slept quite comfortably on the davenport except on restless nights. She would have liked to help with the cooking, but daughters-in-law have ways of their own, and Grandma was not one to cause trouble by trying to interfere. She always set the table and washed most of the dishes and dusted, did what she could.

II

Until Grandma Martin was sixty-six, when she had come to live with her son David, after her children grew up and married, Grandma had lived with her daughter Jessie and Jessie's husband and their daughter Ruth. Grandma had assisted at the birth of Jessie's three children and at the funerals of two of them. Grandma loved Jessie; but, then, she loved David, too. But Jessie was Grandma's

favorite daughter; that was a little different. Ruth was Grandma's favorite grandchild. She had helped rear Ruth, bathed her and dressed her and petted her. Ruth married when she was nineteen. Grandma was glad Ruth married such a fine man, a young fellow and not very rich, though with a steady position, and exceedingly fond of Ruth. Ruth and her husband moved to Chicago when the firm transferred him there. Then, the next year, Jessie's husband died, and that left Jessie and Grandma all alone. Jessie went to Chicago to live with Ruth, went to live with her daughter as Grandma had done, quite the right way to do, naturally. But of course Ruth could not have Grandma, even if she had wanted to have her. One cannot expect a young man on a small salary to support his wife and his mother and a grandmother besides. Grandma knew that. She was glad Ruth was happy and had a nice little home and that Jessie was happy with her. There was no one else—Grandma's second son had been dead for twenty-years—so Grandma had gone to live with David.

David Martin was a good man—good, but rather close and settled and solemn. Mary, David's wife, was a good woman. Grandma appreciated her virtues, but Mary just "wasn't our folks." She was from New England, with a long upper lip and a thin mouth and a way of saying things shortly or not talking at all. Still, she made David happy.

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Grandma was glad of that, and David and his family were happy in a quiet and, to Grandma, almost a sour way. Grandma liked Ruth, with her little bubbles and giggles, and Jessie, with her sensible housewifeliness and her pleasant, understandable love of gossip and discussion. There was something austere about David's family. But Grandma had not had much choice. There was only David to go to, or an old folks' home, and somehow an old folks' home shows that you are unwanted, that your children are failures or ungrateful, unable to have you; it was better at David's.

So twelve years ago Grandma had come to David Martin's and fitted into his five-room apartment and his selfish and self-congratulatory, rather heavy family as best she could. David Martin and his wife occupied one bedroom, and there was no question of Grandma's having that room. The other bedroom belonged inalienably to Isabel, the "young lady daughter" at sixteen, twelve years ago. Ralph already occupied the couch in the living-room; so they had bought the davenport for Grandma.

Now Isabel was married, and Grandma was to have Isabel's room. The family was agreed on that. Grandma had waited for the room long enough and patiently enough, certainly. At one time, even, she had feared, as David and Mary had feared, that Isabel would not marry at all. Isabel was not an attractive young woman, certainly; she

took after her mother's family. She was pale and thin to gauntness, with rather uneven and straight light hair, a nose too large, and high cheek-bones. She was quiet, and had a sharp, rather coarse voice when she spoke; not the type young men like. And yet Grandma had known that if Isabel did not marry, the dining-room davenport would remain permanently hers.

Grandma had been the active matchmaker for Isabel. She had tried for a long time to find among the sons of her acquaintance a marriageable young man who might consider Isabel a suitable mate, but she had not succeeded. Grandma recognized Isabel's limitations but, too, she had seen far less likely girls attain matrimony. Then one day when Grandma was sewing for charity at the Ladies' Aid she met Walter Reynolds. He was a son of a member of the society. Isabel was twenty-seven then, and without suitors. It was a rainy afternoon, and the streets were slippery. When Mrs. Reynolds suggested that her son, who had called for her, escort Grandma home instead, Grandma accepted eagerly. When they reached the apartment, Grandma urged Walter to stay to dinner, her family would be glad to have him. Walter was a round-faced, good-natured-looking fellow of thirty-two or so, with small eyes, a wide, rather empty smile, and a weak chin. Grandma found out on the walk home that he had a small, but dependable,

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mercantile position. It was not a splendid opportunity, but quite as good as Isabel might expect; better, perhaps, than Isabel expected. Isabel had shown no great longings for matrimony. Lacking personality, she lacked the need of attraction as well.

Grandma Martin did what she could to invest Isabel with charm. All the way home she talked about her, preparing Walter for a favourable impression. She flattered Walter in her old-fashioned, gentle way. On arriving home, Grandma went into the kitchen and told Mary, her daughter-in-law, who was preparing the meal, about the guest she had brought home, what a nice woman Walter's mother was, and Walter seemed a fine fellow, too. Something might come of it. Mary had hoped that Isabel would be popular, even married by now. While pretending great indifference to Grandma's hints, she opened some of her own canned peaches, a special treat, and prepared a salad of tinned fish.

Dinner at the Martins was usually of the simplest. The family was the sort that seldom had dinner guests. Grandma and Mary put the dishes on the table, and David served. Ralph, rather spoiled and petted and of a snarly and morose disposition, was always served first. Then came Isabel's portion, and then her mother's was ladled out. After that came Grandma's plateful, and

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then David served himself. David was not specially selfish about food, but Mary was economical about the quantities she prepared, and when not quite enough for two helpings remained at the end, Grandma's portions suffered perhaps a trifle more than David's own.

When there was a dinner guest, the usual custom of serving was varied, and there was generally a little more to eat. Instead of eating almost in silence, broken only by a few complaints from Ralph, a whine from Isabel, a *staccato* sentence or two from Mary, a few comments on the weather or business—business was always dull—from David, the family tried to break out into a general conversation, touching lightly on topics of the day. The first night that Walter dined with the family, Grandma tried with great eagerness to create a spirit of gaiety quite at variance with the usual behavior of the family. It meant a lot to the whole family, to her, this visit. Ralph was in a good humor; his football team had won a game that afternoon. David, openly eager that Isabel marry, and seeing in this stray caller, as he saw in every masculine who approached him, a chance for Isabel, became talkative. Grandma praised the canned peaches and told how Isabel, "the best little cook you ever saw," had put them up during the preceding summer. Grandma had peeled the peaches,

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and Isabel had assisted rather vaguely in the canning.

From the first Walter seemed fairly interested. After dinner Ralph put some records on the Victrola, and Isabel, usually silent, expanded enough to add stray remarks to the conversation.

The next week Grandma called on Walter's mother; it was quite all right, of course, as she lived only a few blocks away. Grandma found out that Walter had two brothers and that his mother did not object to his marrying. Walter came home while Grandma was there—Grandma had strayed from her usual custom of hurrying home early—and escorted Grandma home again and stayed to dinner. Grandma and David flattered Walter, Ralph listened respectfully to his opinions, and Isabel's silence made her seem just pleasantly shy. A week later Grandma telephoned over to Mrs. Reynolds for an embroidery pattern that she thought Mrs. Reynolds had, and Walter brought it over that evening. Grandma prepared Isabel for the visit as well as she could. Isabel did not like advice from an old woman like Grandma, but Isabel was a welcome enough victim to matrimony if it required neither charm nor exertion—most of her friends had married during the preceding years—so she did her best to please Walter, giggling a bit hysterically, but trying hard to be entertaining, now that the quarry seemed possible.

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David himself was especially enthusiastic over the affair. On previous occasions he had brought home business acquaintances. Each call had seemed to him important, an event. Each caller had been to him a distinct matrimonial possibility. None of the callers had ever returned for a second call. Her father had lacked finesse and skill, or perhaps Isabel had too definitely lacked charm. Now, with the fat and slow Walter, Grandma found little difficulty. She hinted of suitors whom Isabel had "turned down." She told of her own popularity and girlhood, how much Isabel resembled her, how girls of Isabel's type develop into such splendid cooks and housekeepers and mothers. Walter, a bit confused and perhaps fascinated by the net spread around him, continued to call. Finally the engagement was announced, and this was followed as quickly as possible by the wedding.

David was grateful to Grandma. Having an old-maid daughter was displeasing to him, not the right thing; it reflected on his success. Girls ought to get married. He definitely acknowledged that Grandma had found a husband, a good husband, too, for his only daughter. That is, he acknowledged it to Grandma immediately after the engagement, and promised Grandma a new black-silk dress for the wedding, which he kept his word about purchasing. If Mary or Isabel felt Grandma's help, they did not mention it. Later the thought

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of Grandma's assistance became a bit hazy even to David Martin, and finally disappeared altogether.

III

Now Isabel was married, and Isabel and Walter had gone to Atlantic City on a honeymoon. They were going to spend a whole week in Atlantic City, and then they were coming back to New York and going to a hotel to stay until they found a suitable apartment. Now that Isabel was married, she became suddenly, vaguely unimportant to Grandma. Her room was different.

Grandma pretended interest in the conversation that was going on in the living-room. Mr. and Mrs. Martin, Ralph, and a boy named Howard, Ralph's best friend, Mr. and Mrs. Fisher, friends of the Martins, and their daughter Eileen were discussing the wedding. They had all just come back from the station, piled rather closely into yellow taxi-cabs.

"Didn't Isabel look sweet! I've never seen her look better in my life. I'm glad she got married in a blue suit instead of white."

"Did you notice Mrs. Roberts and the three daughters in church? It's about time one of those girls . . ."

"Wasn't Walter nervous? A fine fellow, Walter, a fine . . ."

"Isabel said they'd write to-night or to-morrow, anyhow. I hope they have good weather in Atlantic City."

"She certainly made a sweet bride. Isabel is . . ."

Grandma listened as long as she could. Then quietly, so as not to attract attention—but, then, Grandma did most things quietly; it made her feel less in the way—she walked out of the room, down the hall, and into Isabel's room.

The room was upset, full of discarded things, the shell of Isabel as a girl; the box and tissue-paper for the flowers; the dressing-gown that Isabel had been "wearing out," not good enough for marriage and Walter; Isabel's old slippers; letters that had come that day, a wedding present half in its box.

This room—she'd clear it out to-day, still warm as it was from Isabel—was hers. Had not David, even Mary, said so? Grandma was a trifle afraid of her daughter-in-law, and yet sorry for her. It was hard on Mary, having an old woman, a mother-in-law, living with her all the time. Grandma knew that.

Grandma crept out of the room. She did not want them to find her there; they might laugh. Of course they did not know exactly how she felt about the room. And there was Ralph. Grandma had always been a little afraid. Ralph did not have

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a room, either, and Ralph liked to have his own way, and now, of course, being the son of the family, he might think—Grandma decided to ask casually about it at dinner, when the guests were gone, and find out definitely. Maybe she could start sleeping there right away, to-night.

The guests left with much laughter and unpleasant, heavy jests about the young couple. Mary went into the kitchen to prepare the meal, just a "pick-up," and told Grandma not to come in. "Set the table, Ma. No use you standing around in here, with nothing to do."

Finally dinner was on the table, and the family seated. Four seemed few. There had been five, and six when Walter came in, as he had done frequently in the last two months. It was nicer this way. Six at table make a lot of dishes to wash; one gets pretty tired.

They spoke of the wedding: what the minister had said, agreed he'd spoken very nicely and not too long; about the trip and the weather's staying nice.

Grandma took courage. She had to gulp a bit to make the words come. Then she said:

"I think, if you don't mind, now that Isabel—don't you think that I might have—go into—Isabel's room?"

David and Mary and Ralph looked at Grandma. She trembled and tried to pretend it did not matter.

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"Of course, Ma, if you prefer Isabel's room, though your bed is newer and every bit as good as the one Mary and I sleep on."

"I—I think it would be nice," said Grandma.

"Well, Ma might as well take it," Mary spoke as if it were a new thought just occurring to her. "A spare room don't mean nothing but company, and we don't need 'em. You might clean up in there to-morrow."

"I—I could fix it up to-night," said Grandma. She was ashamed because her voice quavered.

"Wait till to-morrow. We're all tired out after the wedding," said Mary. "You got a place to sleep, you know."

Ralph pouted, but about something else. He did not seem to care about the room. To-morrow! It was a certainty, then. She could have Isabel's room, her own room, a room all to herself.

Grandma cleared the table after dinner, taking innumerable little steps between the kitchen and the dining-room. She "brushed up" under the table and put the chairs in order. She washed the dishes then while Mary helped with the drying. Mary's skin was tender, it seemed; hot dish-water hurt it. Grandma's hands were thickened and bent with rheumatism and used to dish-washing.

The dishes done, Grandma sat down in one of the dining-room chairs with some sewing, to wait, as she always waited, for the evening to pass. To-

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morrow night she could go to bed early. Grandma usually found herself growing sleepy right after dinner, and she was ashamed of it; for one of the family always spied her if she closed her eyes for a minute, and would say something about, "There's Grandma asleep again," or, "Wake up, Grandma. You look so funny with your eyes closed and your mouth open." To-night some company came to see Ralph, so Mr. and Mrs. Martin played cards at the dining-room table, quarrelling peaceably over their hands. Grandma nodded a couple of times, woke up again. This night was like nearly every other night for the last twelve years, and yet different, the last night of its kind. To-morrow night she could go to bed at eight if she wanted to.

At ten o'clock Mr. and Mrs. Martin gathered together their cards, said: "Good-night, Ma," and retired. Grandma heard them talking together in their bedroom. They were quiet finally. In the front part of the house Ralph and two friends still talked. If Grandma went to bed, Ralph would complain: "We came to get something to eat, and there was Grandma stretched out asleep on the davenport. This place looks like a tenement. Can't she wait until my company goes home?"

Grandma sewed as long as she could, but her eyes burned before she had finished. So she folded her hands. It was uncomfortable, the dining-room chair, but of course Ralph did not want her in the

living-room, where his friends were. There was a low rocker with arms in Isabel's room!

Grandma woke up with a little start, ashamed of having dozed, and, picking up the evening paper, read for a little while. Her eyes hurt, and she was dreadfully sleepy. Were Ralph's friends going home at last? Now they were just moving round; here they came. The three boys trooped into the dining-room and on into the kitchen. At least Grandma had not been in bed; Ralph could not get angry. She was not asleep, even.

"Oh, Gamma," called Ralph, "anything to eat here, cookies or anything?"

"I'm a-coming," Grandma answered as she always answered, and hurried with quick little steps into the kitchen. She found a box of store cakes and three apples for them. Mary would probably get angry about the apples, about "feeding the neighborhood," and Grandma might have to say that she had taken one of them, the day before, for lunch. That would fix it. Mary and Isabel had gone out then, and had forgotten to leave anything for Grandma.

Finally, with a "See you to-morrow, Ralph," the boys left, and Ralph returned to the living-room.

Now Grandma could go to bed. She opened the davenport—it was rather heavy—then brought in, in three trips, her blanket, her sheets, and her pillow from the hall closet. Stooping over the bed—her

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back did not really ache so much now—she smoothed the sheets with her bent fingers. Tomorrow she could make up her bed in the morning, have it all ready just for turning down at night. Of course David and Mary could not realize how hard it is to make a bed at night, when one has to open it oneself, too, when one is old and very tired. Still, they were good. Hadn't they both said she could have Isabel's room?

It took Grandma only a few minutes to get ready for bed. She always hurried as fast as she could. She wore a false, grey switch to eke out her very scanty hair, and she tucked this up into a roll and slipped it under the pillow. Once she had been guilty of putting it on the buffet, and Mary had passed through the dining-room while Grandma was still asleep and had not liked it. False hair on the buffet! One could not really blame Mary.

Grandma fell asleep almost immediately despite the hard rod in the middle of the springs. Some nights that bothered her, though she had learned how to lie so as to avoid it.

She woke up with a start the next morning, and then remembered: it was the day she was going into her own room! It was still early; she didn't hear anyone stirring. She was glad of that. She liked to be all dressed before anyone had to pass through the dining-room. It was rather awkward

being caught still in bed or not completely clothed. This morning, as usual, Grandma was the first one to wake up. She got up quickly, and, putting on her old grey bath-robe, which hung in the hall closet next to Ralph's rain-coat, Grandma's dresses, and the family umbrellas, she made the bed. She tucked her night-gown into the pillow-slip next to the pillow, as she always did, for someone was always opening the hall closet if she hung it up there, and saying things about it. She put the bed-clothes back into the closet, closed and fastened the davenport, depositing upon its sleek and uncomfortable surface the two hand-embroidered pillows that reposed there by day. Grandma hurried to the bathroom; it was the best time to bathe. If she waited until later, David and Ralph were wanting to get in, and at night Grandma was too tired. Then Grandma dressed. She took her clean house-dress from a pile of three that she had carefully hidden in the buffet drawer under the kitchen towels. She always put away the laundry herself, and Mary always took the top towel. They'd laugh at her if they found her dresses there, but even house-dresses have to have some place.

Grandma set the table then, and had the coffee on when Mary came into the kitchen. Theirs was a simple breakfast of stewed fruit, a cereal with milk, and toast. Grandma was so excited she could hardly eat anything. She waited patiently for

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David to leave with his customary, "‘Bye folks; don’t work too hard," meant for a great pleasantry. He had an idea that "women have got an easy time of it." It was as if Isabel had never been there. No one mentioned her name, and yet there was her room.

After the dishes were done and Grandma had swept and dusted the living-room, she said, with a careful attempt at nonchalance: "I—I believe I’ll go in now and fix up Isabel’s room. I think I’d like——"

"You certainly are hankering after that room, Ma," Mary answered. "Well, you might as well go ahead. Don’t put that lace scarf back on the dresser. Isabel’ll want it; and leave all of her things in her closet the way she has them until she comes back and looks ’em over."

"Of course; that will be all right. My things won’t take up much room," Grandma said pleasantly.

IV

It was a delightful occupation, cleaning up her own room. First she swept it, opening wide both the windows. Then she dusted, going carefully over every round of the two chairs, polishing the mirror and the top of the dresser. She made the bed, putting on her own two sheets; she’d used the

top one only two days. Then Grandma brought in her possessions; there were three empty drawers in the dresser and lots of closet space. From the buffet, hidden under towels and napkins, came the morning dresses, aprons, and decent, thick underwear. From the back partition of the knife-and-fork drawer came Grandma's comb and brush of imitation ivory that Ruth had sent to her the year before for Christmas. These, and a silver-plated mirror, once owned by Isabel, but discarded when her father gave her a better one, Grandma placed on a clean towel on the dresser. She added a picture of Ruth and Ruth's two children sent to her only a few months before, an old picture of Jessie, and a kodak picture of Isabel and Ralph. Next to this she put a little china vase that had been given to her at a church bazaar five years before, a gay little vase with blue china forget-me-nots on the front of it. To these she added a hand-painted fan Jessie had done years before, and, as a final touch, a faded daguerreotype in a broken frame of Grandpa Martin and herself, taken sixty years ago, sitting stiffly, holding hands. A fine array! the room was in order, her room! Grandma was tired now, but that did not matter. Nothing seemed to matter but the room, a room nobody had to pass through, a room with a door that closed and locked—her own room.

All afternoon Grandma sat and rocked; Mary

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had gone to her card club. It was fun just sitting still. She hardly remembered to put on the dinner dishes in time, and was just finishing setting the table when Mary came home. At eight o'clock, almost as soon as dinner was over and before she felt even sleepy, Grandma said: "I'm awfully tired. Believe I'll go to bed, if you'll please excuse me."

"She worked herself tired fixing up that room in a hurry," volunteered Mary.

"So you got moved into Isabel's room?" asked David. Then: "Women are always wanting to move around. I don't know that her mattress is any more comfortable than yours, and it's much older."

"It's a very nice room," said Grandma, softly, and went to her own room.

Grandma undressed slowly, with a light on and the shades pulled down. Seated in her bath-robe, in the rocking-chair, she finished David's socks, and read a chapter in a book a woman she had met in church had loaned her. It was a wonderful evening. At nine o'clock she went to bed. It was a fine bed, and all ready to get into just by turning down the spread, and with no bar in the centre to have to think about.

Grandma woke up the next morning at her usual time; she was not one who had to depend on alarm-clocks. Then, when she realized where she was, in

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Isabel's bed, in her own bed, she lay there luxuriously, instead of getting up immediately on awakening, as she usually did. But she was up and dressed and had the table set in plenty of time. It was nice to dress, with all of one's things spread round ready for one, instead of having to hunt for them in little, secret places, and to be sure that no one would want to pass through one's room or would see one through an open doorway.

It rained steadily for the next three days, but Grandma hardly knew it. She was not accustomed to running round much anyhow. And with a room to herself, going outside for pleasure seemed superfluous. Didn't she have all the pleasure she could think of right there at home? Having a room to herself was even nicer than she had thought it could possibly be. After twelve years—twelve years of the dining-room, of hurrying mornings to get up, of waiting nights to go to bed. Well, she had her her own room now. It was not so much that Grandma thought of the room as a reward; she did not believe in things like that. It was just pleasant, complete. She was old, and she had tried to do the right things. She had had hard times, losing Grandpa while she was still young and, after Grandpa died, when the children were little; but that did not make any difference now, for they had grown up, Jessie and David, into good children,

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good people. Those hard times were long ago; why, even the nights on the davenport were long ago. This was now, and she had her own room, a pleasant room all to herself, and nice meals. David and Mary and Ralph did not mean to talk unkindly or abruptly to her, that was just their way; and now that Isabel was gone, things did not seem so crowded. Four people in five rooms is not much, one could not ask for better than that, better than Grandma had—a quiet, peaceful life with one's son and his wife and their son, and a room all to herself.

At noon on the fifth day after Isabel's wedding Mary received a telegram from Isabel from Atlantic City, economically using all of the allowable ten words:

"Raining here better at home arrive seven time for dinner."

Grandma was sorry about Isabel. It seemed a shame her honeymoon should be spoiled. Still, Isabel seemed far away, of no importance, in a different world. Isabel and Walter would go to a hotel and then buy their furniture and get an apartment. Grandma would even help Isabel fix up the apartment if they wanted her to.

Mary telephoned to David about Isabel and Walter's coming, and he and Ralph met them at the station. They all came home together, carrying

suit-cases and talking all at once about the rain, the trip, the things that had taken place during Isabel's absence, little things, letters of good wishes, a delayed wedding gift.

Dinner was an exciting meal that night at the Martins. Walter, in his slow, rather stupid way, described the charms of the hotel room they had occupied, of the lobbies and the grill-room. Isabel, too, occasionally volunteered a word of praise of their trip and of their expenditures.

"We got to start saving now," she said, "with Walter's salary so small and the prices what they are. It's awful. We saw Irene Jennings in Atlantic City—you know, used to be Irene Scott—and she said that they gave up their apartment in One Hundred and Seventeenth Street and simply can't get another one except for double the price. And when I think of the hovels I saw before I went away, it's fierce. Ma, did you see that apartment I spoke to you about, the one near the Robinson's, on St. Nicholas?"

"Yes, I was there Tuesday. It's gone, and the only one left in the building is twenty dollars more than it used to be."

"Gee! I don't know what we'll do."

Walter grinned. For the first time Grandma actually disliked Walter's grin. Until now Walter had been someone for Isabel to marry. Now he became a person, a personality, and to Grandma

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an unpleasant one, too sure of himself, too slow and fat and round and white.

"Prices are something awful," said Walter. "It makes a person wonder whether they ought to of got married or not, eh, Isabel?"

"It ain't that bad, I guess," said Isabel, and gave him a glum look and then a quick smile, which left her face looking more discontented than ever.

"Rents, rents, rents," said David Martin, solemnly. "You bet I was smart. I saw what was coming. I always look ahead. I took a four years' lease here. Now I've got them where I want them. They can't pull any monkey-shines on me. Some folks take the biggest apartment they can pay for, with elevators and a lot of fancy trimmin's, and sassy niggers in the hall. 'Don't give the landlord all your money,' I always say."

"You said it," answered Walter.

After dinner the family went into the living-room. Usually only two lights were lit, but this was a festive occasion, so all four lights in the immense and hideous central chandelier were turned on, and both lights in the equally ugly glass table-lamp.

Grandma decided to go to her room early, but it wouldn't look right, running away, just yet, so she sat stiffly in a straight chair near the phonograph.

"We'd better be getting along," Walter said at last. "I might as well ring up from here and find

a hotel room. We came right on from the station and didn't stop to get any. Always can find a room in some hotel, though."

He went to the telephone in the hall.

"Only thing they had—room and bath for two, eight dollars. I turned that down," he reported. Then added: "Seven dollars for room and bath"; then: "That one's all filled up; nothing doing there." Then: "They want eight dollars, too. I told them nothing doing. Highway robbers! They can't play me for a rube."

Even then Grandma did not suspect what was to follow. It was David who spoke, still proud because Isabel had finally acquired a husband.

"I say, you folks, what you want to be running around in the rain for, finding a hotel room? You got your suit-cases here. Why not stay? Ain't we got room?"

"Sure we have," agreed Mary. She was the type of woman who never gets used to men, no matter how long she has been married. Despite her lack of good looks and charm and her prim, almost austere ways, she coquetted ever so slightly with every man she met, a mere suspicion of a giggle, of a flourish, a combination of shyness and self-consciousness. She did this now and added: "I couldn't think of my daughter—and my new son—going out in this weather, as if we didn't have a home for them."

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"But you haven't got room enough, I'm afraid," protested Walter, politely.

"We got my room," said Isabel.

Grandma understood now—understood, trembled, but refused to believe. She wanted to say something, but couldn't. What could she say?

"Grandma's got that," said Ralph.

"She has?" Isabel was cool, almost a bit sneering. "She was in a hurry about it, it seems to me."

"You—you said I could have it; always said I could," Grandma's voice quavered. She wanted to add something important, vital. She waited.

"Yes, we did say if Isabel went away you could have her room," said David, heavily; "I'll agree to that. But Isabel ain't away. Isabel's right here." He gave his slow, patronizing smile. "We can't put Isabel out, can we—Isabel and her husband?" he went on. "What's the use of them going to a hotel or hunting around for an apartment? If they found one, they'd have to give the landlord all they've got. No, sir, as long as I got a roof over my head, my home is open to my children."

There was a pause. Martin looked round, expecting praise for his eloquence.

"Well, if you insist," said Walter, "it sure suits me if Isabel wants to. Of course if we'd be a bit of trouble, if Isabel——"

"Papa's right," said Isabel. "I'll need enough money, with everything so high, without spending

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it on rent. We might as well stay here at home. It ain't as though we aren't going to chip in and help with the table, Walter and I," she finished grandly, with a nod to Walter.

"Sure thing. That settles that. We ain't no charity patients," said Walter.

"I'd better see about our room," said Isabel. Then to Grandma: "You moved your things in and all, I suppose."

Grandma nodded. She couldn't trust herself to speak.

Maybe Isabel saw the pain behind the expression of calm that Grandma tried to assume; perhaps only her own selfishness cut her.

"I'm—sorry," she said. "I wish you could keep your things in my closet. If—if it wasn't for Walter's things, there might be room; but with my things, and him here now——"

"Grandma's got the hall closet she always had, ain't she?" asked David. "It ain't as if we were turning Grandma out into the street. Nobody don't need to take it hard. Grandma can have the room she's always had, and her own bed, again. Walter and Isabel will have lots of space in Isabel's room. It's a big, fine room, with two windows; better than you'd get at one of those flossy hotels for eight dollars a day. And Grandma—Grandma ain't got any complaints. She's got a good home.

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As long as I got a home, I got room enough for all of my children and for my mother. Why, right now Grandma's bed is better than the one that I sleep on and years newer. Yes, it is; it's lots better than the bed I got."

Grandma got up and followed Isabel from the living-room into Isabel's room. She took little, slow steps. She felt tired. She'd get her things out right away, so that Isabel and Walter could have the room. It was all right, of course, as David said; she'd have what she'd always had, had for twelve years—the davenport in the dining-room. It didn't much matter, after all. She'd had lots of happiness, lots of good times: Grandpa, the years with him, the children when they were babies; the years with Jessie. She might even have the room again, some time, when rents got lower or Isabel grew discontented at home. One can't expect too much. She ought to feel satisfied; she felt that, with Ruth married and happy, a nice family, and Jessie with them; and David and Mary happy in their way, and Isabel married. Walter was a good man, would be good to Isabel. After all, she was an old woman; mustn't expect too much out of life. After all, she had had good times.

"I'll—I'll get my things out right away; just take me a minute," Grandma told Isabel in her usual, cheerful way. "I'll tuck 'em right away

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where I always kept 'em, so you and Walter can make yourselves comfortable. It's a nice room. I—I hope you and Walter are—are right happy there."